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ABSTRACT

This document explains how to conduct a successful job search. The following items are included: (1) an outline of a self-assessment process to help jobseekers identify their needs, interests, and skills; (2) a discussion of strategies for locating job openings; (3) information on the job application process (guidelines for applying for jobs in person and with a cover letter and resume, a list of information to gather in preparation for writing a cover letter, a sample cover letter, and tips for formatting a cover letter); (4) information about resumes (a discussion of the purposes of resumes, guidelines for writing a resume, suggestions for making a resume computer friendly, and a list of action words and phrases and a sample chronological resume); (5) information about job interviews (a discussion of the importance of first impressions, guidelines for preparing for an interview, suggestions for overcoming interview anxiety, questions interviewers are likely to ask, questions interviewees are not required to answer, and questions jobseekers might want to ask during an interview); (6) guidelines for writing a follow-up letter and a sample follow-up letter; and (7) a list of additional resources available in print or on the World Wide Web. (MN)



Job Search Tips – Resumes, Interviews and More

ED 449 328

When looking for a first job or a better job, the best way to begin is to bring the same skills to the search that you will bring to a new job. As you start an organized job search and are thorough and positive in the steps you take, you are presenting skills valued by employers.

SELF ASSESSMENT

The first step to take when looking for a job is to decide what you want from a job and also what you have to offer employers. Self-assessment can be time-consuming, but it offers valuable information to help you make career choices. The best way to begin your search is to identify your needs, your interests and your skills.

What are your needs?

Deciding what you need in a career will help you explore your career goals and gain satisfaction from your work. For instance: How important is job security? Do you want a chance to advance? Are you mostly interested in financial rewards? Do you want to work in an area where you help others? Make a list of 10 items most important to you, and then rank these items from most important to least important. Some areas you might consider are job location, security, responsibility and independence.

What are your interests?

After deciding the needs you bring to a new job or career, it is important to list your basic interests, the things you most like to do. ICPAC offers a Career Interest

Checklist that lists items such as fixing cars, keeping detailed records, using a cash register, working with animals, etc. This interest inventory asks questions that help you match what you like to do with careers.

What are your skills?

List all of your work-related experiences and, next to these, list the skills you used or developed during those experiences. Looking over the following list should help you think of skills you may need on the job.

- time management
- information evaluation
- accuracy
- good decision making
- reliability
- organization
- ability to motivate people
- problem solving
- data analysis
- efficiency
- flexibility
- communications

For help finding a match between your skills and what you like to do, call the ICPAC Hotline at 800-992-2076 and ask for IS-50: *Discover Careers that Fit You*, or view this document on the Internet at icpac.indiana.edu/infoseries/is-50.html.

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INFO SERIES IS-09

Skills developed by Babysitting

- self-management
- interpersonal skills
- budgeting money
- marketing skills
- responsibility
- reliability

Skills needed to become a Salesperson

- Marketing oneself or a product through an interview or an application.
- Reliability, such as arriving on time to the workplace or interview.
- Self-management, such as balancing school commitments, homework and work.

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JOB OPENINGS

When you start looking for job leads, you will want to look for them in many different places. Employers advertise in newspapers, professional or trade journals, school career placement offices, temporary job agencies and private employment agencies. You should also check ICPAC's Careers and Work Links page at icpac.indiana.edu/index1.html#seek.

In addition to these, consider the following strategies:

- Talk with friends and relatives who have good jobs about your job search. Many jobs are filled by employee referrals. Some organizations pay their employees a cash bonus for recommending applicants who get hired.
- Medium to larger companies have their own employment staffs. Make "cold calls" to these offices. You will generally be treated with respect and given an application form to fill out for their files.

The U.S. Department of Labor provides free state employment offices to help people find jobs. You should register at your nearest state employment service for listings of entry-level job openings.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

You need to be prepared to apply for some jobs in person and for others with a cover letter and resume.

Applying in person

When applying in person, you should be neatly dressed and be prepared to leave a copy of your resume for the company files. Bring the following information in order to fill out an application form:

- Your social security number.
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of the schools you have attended and your last three employers.
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of persons who have agreed to provide references for you.
- Dates of your education and previous employment.

When you complete an application form you should:

- Look over the entire form, read the instructions carefully and ask questions if you need to.
- Use black or dark blue ink and print your answers as neatly as possible.
- Answer all questions and be honest in your answers.
- Read over the completed form, checking for errors.
- Sign the application only after you have read the fine print.

To learn more about job searches and other career and education topics, **contact ICPAC at 800-992-2076 or icpac.indiana.edu**. Ask for free copies of:

- IS-46: *Job Outlook Information – Careers for the Future*
- IS-50: *Discover Careers that Fit You*
- IS-65: *Career Areas to Explore and Jobs in Them*
- IS-74: *Job Shadowing, Internships and More Ways to Experience Careers*
- IS-82: *Success on the Job – Skills Wanted by Employers*
- IS-83: *Indiana Workforce Development Centers*

Applying with a cover letter and resume

When you send a resume to a potential employer, always include an **individualized** cover letter. (See example on page 4)

Your cover letter introduces you to a potential employer. **Its purpose is to highlight your skills and experience.** You also want to convince the employer to look at your resume and schedule an interview with you. Your completed letter should be typed on high quality, full-size stationery. Use a standard business format (as shown on the next page), and be sure your letter is free of errors. Ask someone to proofread it for you.

Address your cover letter to the employer by name and title. To get this information, call the company human resource office. In your letter, mention how you found out about the job opening and explain your reason for writing. Mention what it is about this job that interests you. Also try to note something uniquely associated with the employer that shows your interest and shows that you have knowledge of the organization.

In the body of your cover letter include a statement or two about your experience. **Target your skills to the needs of the company** and the position, and support your statement with examples. Also, include key strengths you think would make you successful at the job.

If you have limited experience, draw the employer's attention to the depth of your interest and to personal qualities that will make you a good employee – like being hard-working, well-organized, self-motivated and a good problem-solver.

To end your letter, **request an interview** and sign your name above your typed signature.

Get ready to write your cover letter

Gather the following information before you start writing your cover letter.

- Who is the company contact person?
- What is the complete name and address of the company?
- What do you know about the company? Include the name of the person referring you, if appropriate.
- What do you know about the position? Include how you can perform well in the position if you are hired.
- What skills, abilities and strengths can you bring to this position? Include how your knowledge and skills can help the company meet its goals.
- What more do you need to say? Did you request an interview? Thank the employer for his or her time? Refer to your resume or ask about the next steps in the hiring process?

For links to job search services on the World Wide Web, **check the ICPAC Web site at icpac.indiana.edu.**

A list of the 25 occupations in Indiana that will have the most openings from 2000-2006 and information about these occupations are also available on the Internet. See the ICPAC Web site at icpac.indiana.edu/jobopens.html.

Sample cover letter

February 1, 2000

9225 Elm Ave.
South Bend, IN 43451

Ms. Judy Conners
District Supervisor
Johnson Steel Company
P.O. Box 9382
Gary, IN 46521-9382

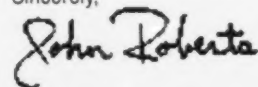
Dear Ms. Conners:

During my recent internship with Chicago Steel, my supervisor was Greg Silvers. Mr. Silvers had been a shift manager with Johnson Steel for several years, and he told me that Johnson Steel is a rapidly growing company using cutting-edge technology in its production processes. Mr. Silvers feels my knowledge and skills would enable me to be an effective employee in your recently retooled Gary foundry.

I now work as an advanced apprentice with U.S. Steel. I have an associate's degree in metal foundry technology from Anderson Technical School. An enclosed resume lists my skills in can washing, smelting and casting services, and shredding equipment operation and management. I would like to schedule an appointment with you to learn more about Johnson Steel and its employment opportunities. I will call your office in a few days to see if there is a convenient time for us to meet.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



John Roberts

Make sure your cover letter:

- Is typed or word processed without errors on high quality, 8 1/2" x 11" stationery.
- Uses an appropriate or standard business letter format.
- Provides a friendly review of your prior contacts and the reason for your letter.
- Targets your skills and experiences to the company or specific job.
- Illustrates your interest and enthusiasm for the position and the company.
- Refers to your resume.
- Identifies clearly what you hope will happen next or what you will do next.

CREATING YOUR RESUME

A resume is a summary of your education, employment and experience. When you fill out an application for a job, you tell future employers what *they* want to know. A resume is a way for you to tell employers what *you* want them to know.

The purpose of a resume is to **market your skills, abilities and professional qualifications** to a potential employer. Often, it is your resume that earns you the chance to interview for a job. Include positive information about yourself in your resume and target it to the kind of work you want, but do not exaggerate or be dishonest.

Like your cover letter, you will want to word process your resume on high quality, full-size stationery. Also, be sure your resume is free of errors; ask someone to proofread it for you.

The type of resume used most often, especially for beginning workers, is the chronological resume, which outlines your education, experience and activities in time order. A sample of a chronological resume is on page 6.

Writing your resume

You will need to gather the following information before you begin to write your resume:

- Schools you have attended and degrees you have earned.
- Job titles and locations of work experience, duties and achievements.
- Job titles and locations of volunteer work experience, duties and achievements.

- Activities you have been involved in both in and outside of school, any earned honors or certificates.
- Names and address of references.

Making your resume computer friendly

Today most companies use computers to scan resumes. The following tips may help your resume survive the computer scan.

- **Use plain white paper.** Colored paper, graphics and shading all increase the odds of a scanner error.
- **Your name should be the first thing the computer sees.**
- **Use the language of the classified ad.** Computers look for these words in your resume.
- **Don't clutter your resume.** Computers look for white space to recognize different sections.
- **Use occupationally phrases.** Key words help the computer distinguish candidates with industry experience.

INTERVIEWING TO IMPRESS

First impressions count

Many employers make their hiring decision in the first few minutes of an interview. Make a good first impression.

- **Dress appropriately.** Wear an outfit one step above what is normally worn by people working in similar jobs. Make sure your clothes are pressed and in good repair. Always wear socks or hose, polish your shoes and use cologne and jewelry sparingly.

Resume action words and phrases

administered
analyzed
coordinated
created
designed
developed
directed
established
expanded
implemented
improved
increased
instructed
managed
modified
organized
planned
presented
researched
scheduled
solved
supervised
trained
worked independently

Sample chronological resume

LAURA ANNE GREEN
2345 N. HOLLAND ST.
ELLETTSVILLE, IN 47429
(812) 555-5555

OBJECTIVE Assistant manager in a major retail store

EDUCATION Edgewood High School, Ellettsville, Indiana
May 1999
Business Practices Program
3.0 GPA

EXPERIENCE Clerk, Ellettsville Emporium, Ellettsville, Indiana
May 1998-present
Responsible for floor sales and inventory in a houseware and
linens specialty store

Chef's Assistant, Royal Catering, Bloomington, Indiana
May 1997-May 1998
Ordered and prepared ingredients for chef

Tennis Coach, YMCA Summer Camps, Bloomington, Indiana
May 1998-June 1998
Introduced children ages 8 to 12 to basic tennis skills

ACTIVITIES Treasurer, Future Business Leaders of America
August 1997-May 1998
Responsible for keeping accounting and other business records
of the organization

Coordinator, Church Youth Group
May 1997-present
Scheduled activities and chaired meetings for 150 members

Co-captain and letter winner, Varsity Tennis
August 1998-May 1999
Helped organize, lead and work with team to win
regional championship

Make sure your resume:

- Includes either (1) complete sentences or (2) phrases. It should not mix the two. Phrase outlines are generally easier to read than sentence outlines.
- Does not use periods at the end of phrases in a phrase outline.
- Includes dates when you were participating in each activity or working each job.

References

It is important to include a list of people as references who know you well or work with you. Ask them in advance if they will serve as a reference for you. Type the names, titles, addresses and phone numbers of your references on a separate sheet of paper. Provide this sheet with your resume and cover letter.

- **Be well-groomed.** Your hair should be clean and combed, your fingernails clean and neatly trimmed and your breath clean and fresh. If you wear glasses, be sure to clean them.
- **Arrive 10-15 minutes early.** Smile at every person you see, and shake hands firmly with each person you meet. Look over your resume or read company literature if you must wait for your interview to begin, but don't smoke, eat or chew gum.
- **Be alert and interested.** Use proper language and correct grammar when you speak. Listen closely when anyone talks to you. Maintain eye contact with people whether you are talking or listening.
- **Be prepared.** Research the company before you interview. Request information from the human resource office, or look up information at your school, public library or on the Internet.

Interview anxiety

Everyone experiences some nervousness in job interviews. To reduce anxiety, practice answers to typical interview questions. Also, prepare questions to ask the employer. In situations of extreme anxiety, quiet your nerves with active listening – repeat in your mind every word the interviewer says. This will help you concentrate and relieve stress by taking your focus off yourself.

Typical questions asked by interviewers

You may be interviewed by one person or by a few, and the questions asked of you may be broad or specific. To prepare for job interviews, practice – but don't

memorize word-for-word your answers to the typical interview questions that follow. Focus on your skills and past experiences and use examples to back up what you say. When possible, target answers to the company or organization.

Following are samples of interview questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- What kind of people do you find most difficult to work with?
- Why are you the best candidate for this position?
- Have you ever done this kind of work before?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What kind of machines, tools or equipment can you use?
- Can you work under pressure and deadlines?
- What does teamwork mean to you?
- Which of your previous jobs did you enjoy most? Why?
- Have you ever had a problem on a job, and how did you handle it?
- Are you willing to travel or relocate?
- What position do you expect to have five years from now?
- What are your future plans?
- When are you available to work?
- Why are you leaving your current job?

Interview questions you don't have to answer

It is illegal for employers to ask questions in the following areas:

- Sex, race, religion or ethnic background.
- Age, unless there are legal restrictions about age related to the specific job.
- Marital status, children or other family members.
- A non-work-related disability.
- An arrest record.
- Details of a military discharge.

Some of these questions may appear on an official job application form, and it is your choice whether or not to answer. If you believe you have been denied employment based on issues unrelated to your ability to do the job, contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in your state.

Questions you may want to ask

Asking questions of the employer shows that you are interested in the job. It also may allow you the opportunity to talk about some of the research you have done on the company. Do not ask about salary or benefits in a first interview unless the employer brings up the topic. Questions you may want to ask:

- What might a typical day be like?
- What training programs are offered?
- Are there opportunities for advancement and self-improvement?
- What is the greatest challenge of this position?
- Why is this position open?
- Where does this job fit within the company's activities?
- To whom would I report? May I meet this person?
- May I meet people I would supervise?
- What is the future for this job and company?
- Can I talk with a few employees about working at this company?
- May I visit work area?
- How do you see this position changing in the next few years?
- When do you expect to make a hiring decision?

FOLLOW UP WITH A LETTER

After interviewing for a job, send a follow-up letter to thank the person or persons who interviewed you. Mail the letter the day after your interview.

Keep your letter short and friendly. Be specific about when you will next contact the employer, but do not push what you want. Remember, this is a thank you for what they did for you. Like your cover letter and resume, type or word process your follow-up letter on quality stationery.

Sample follow-up letter

April 11, 2000

2345 N. Holland St.
Ellettsville, IN 47429

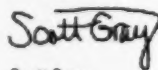
Mr. Joe Smith
Human Resource Director
Wal-Mart
3201 W. State Road 45
Bloomington, IN 47408

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the position of assistant manager. Speaking with you and your co-workers has increased my interest in working with your company.

I will call you at the end of the week to check on the progress of your hiring decision. If you need any more information from me, please call me at 555-5555.

Sincerely,



Scott Gray

Additional resources

- *The Very Quick Job Search: Get a Good Job in Less Time* by J. Michael Farr
- *How to Land a Better Job* by Catherine S. Lott and Oscar C. Lott
- *A Young Person's Guide to Getting & Keeping a Good Job* by J. Michael Farr and Marie Pavlicko
- Job Smart Resume Guide at jobsmart.org/tools/resume/index.htm
- Job Bank USA Resume Resources at www.interbiznet.com/hunt/tools.html
- America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us/
- Jobtrak at www.jobtrak.com/